

LABOUR MONTHLY

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THE NEW CRISIS OF CAPITALISM

The Editor

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DANGER TO DEMOCRACY IN INDIA

Dilip Bose

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SCOTTISH NATIONALISM

Winifred Ewing, M.P.

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BRITAIN'S 'INVISIBLES'

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Rebel Countess, C. Desmond Greaves; My 'Obituary', Jack
Dash; Jack Lindsay on Josef Herman; Barbara Morris on
William Morris

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Notes of the Month

THE NEW CRISIS OF CAPITALISM

'Tragic indeed is the spectacle of the might, majesty and power of the once magnificent and still considerable British Empire having to worry and wonder how we can pay the monthly bills.'

WINSTON CHURCHILL, House of Commons, July 30, 1952.

January 15, 1968

By the time these Notes are read the Government's programme of cuts and added burdens on the people will have been announced. It would be idle to speculate in advance on the details of this latest offensive. The outlines of the plans under consideration have been sufficiently indicated in the preceding publicity barrage, and the abundant accounts, including from the lips of Ministers, of the 'heartbreaking' and 'agonising' discussions and reappraisals in the Cabinet. The measure of parliamentary opposition, reflecting the opposition in the broad trade union and labour movement, in the face of ferocious disciplinary whips designed to stifle it, will have been shown. Whatever the details of the final decisions, it is evident that they will represent the culminating bankruptcy of the entire strategic, foreign and home policy of the Wilson Labour Government. But indeed the bankruptcy is of all the policies of British imperialism since the war, whether under a Conservative or 'Labour' frontispiece. And the repercussions reach far more widely than Britain. This is a developing crisis, not only of capitalism in Britain, but on a world scale, and not least in the United States, the citadel of world capitalism, now also engaged in a battle for self-preservation. The political battle which has now opened in Britain is of international significance.

How Not to Cut 'Defence'

It is evident to all that the entire grandiose 'East of Suez' strategy, so pompously proclaimed and tenaciously maintained until the very last moment by Mr. Wilson and his colleagues, as by all the preceding Tory Ministers since the war, is now bankrupt amid open divisions between the former allies. But the enforced retreats and withdrawals which have had to be decided or accelerated by no means signify conversion to a rational policy. The whip of economic compulsion has taught no lesson, but only exacted a partial grudging

obedience. The essential mania continues. Britain still seeks to maintain its suicidal nuclear role, if without F111 bombers, but certainly with Polaris. Indeed, the recent Brussels review of Nato strategy has emphasised the key importance of Britain in providing the nuclear strike for Nato. While the United States is allocating already five billion dollars, or more than the total British arms budget, for the initial stage of installation of anti-missile missiles for the defence of key centres in the United States in the event of nuclear war, Britain remains the undefended main offensive nuclear base of the entire Western alliance, and therefore the immediate key target in the event of major war.

Military Stranglehold

Britain continues with its troops in West Germany as a member of the Nato alliance of counter-revolution, even after France has had the good sense to withdraw its active military participation and expel the occupying American military troops (transferred of course to Britain). In practice Nato has long ceased even to appear to fulfil its always fictitious function of 'defence', now that the initial myth of Soviet aggressive intentions has been abandoned on all sides. Today Nato has become in fact the cover and support organisation for German militarism to build up what is now the strongest army in capitalist Europe, with open expansionist aims. Britain remains even tied to the Seato commitments. Britain continues as the despised satellite of the United States, squandering hundreds of millions in foreign exchange to buy dollar arms imports even after all the projected cuts and reductions, and with its abject subservience displayed in the support for the shameful war in Vietnam, at a time when nearly every other major Government (not to mention the Labour Party Conference and the Pope) have spoken out. Under these conditions of continuance of the old basic policy, it will be found that after all the loudly publicised 'defence cuts' the arms bill will remain of astronomical proportions. The noise about the 'defence cuts' has mainly served as the strategy to put over the real objective of the attack on the standards of the people in order to pay for the costly requirements of imperialism and swell the profits of big capital.

The Main Offensive

The strategy of raising the maximum publicity over the 'defence cuts' in order to facilitate acceptance of the offensive against the

social services and the living standards of the people was already exemplified at the outset by the clamour over the ban on the export of arms to South Africa, which gave Premier Wilson the opportunity to launch the new social and economic offensive on the people by his declaration in Parliament on December 18 that, as a necessary counterpart of the ban on arms for South Africa, 'no area of expenditure can be regarded as sacrosanct'. Thus the grand offensive was launched to supplement the already heavy blows of the three years of deflationary offensive, increased taxation and wage restraint, and the further July 1966 measures of tightened restriction designed to increase unemployment, by the new post-devaluation offensive to hold up development in health, education and the social services, impose new burdens and seek to compel with statutory powers a limit for wage increases below the level of the rise in the cost of living caused by devaluation, that is, to reduce real wages. All this will inevitably give rise to the widest opposition from all sections of the labour movement, and from the trade unions and the industrial, professional and technical workers, among whom militant currents are gathering force. The biggest battle of the left has now opened.

Old Battles in a New Guise

The formula to seek to solve the problems of the deepening crisis of British imperialism by attacks on the wages and standards of the workers is the old familiar recipe at every stage in the development of the general crisis of capitalism. In the nineteen-twenties this was the theme of Baldwin's 'All wages must come down', which led to the General Strike of 1926. In the nineteen-thirties this was the theme of MacDonald's ten per cent cut in unemployment benefits, which broke the second Labour Government, provoked through the cutting of service pay the sailors' revolt at Invergordon, and led to the first peacetime devaluation of the pound, the mass depression and unemployment of the thirties, with Labour out of office for fourteen years. With the third Labour Government the theme was repeated with Cripps' austerity and the wage freeze, to pay for the crippling rearmament programme, which led to the fall of the Labour Government and Labour out of office again for thirteen years. And now? It is up to the mass of the labour movement to see that this time a different outcome is achieved. For we have now reached a much deeper stage equally in the crisis of British capitalism and of world capitalism.

A New Kind of 1931

In 1931 the initial impetus which set in motion the chain of events culminating in Britain's crisis and devaluation in September 1931, the immediately following New York Stock Exchange débâcle in October 1931 and the ensuing world economic crisis, was the collapse of the Credit Anstalt Bank in Austria in 1929. Austria, for centuries the centre of a great empire, had lost that empire through the outcome of the First World War, and become a diminished smaller state with a precarious basis—but yet not so small that its tremors could play a key part in unloosing a world economic crisis. At that time Britain, although struggling with the continuous economic depression since the winter of 1920, was still the centre of the largest world empire, even further enlarged by the acquisitions through the First World War, and was vaingloriously determined to maintain the restored prewar gold parity and 'look the dollar in the face'. This time the situation is changed. It is Britain which has lost its centuries-old position as the centre of a vast empire (although still maintaining worldwide overseas exploitation alongside political and military entanglements), and has become the 'Sick Man of Europe' with chronic economic instability and balance of payments deficits. Britain is now a diminished power on the world scale; but the crisis of sterling and devaluation in November could send tremors through all the countries of the capitalist world, bring the domination of the dollar into question, and lead to the aggressive counter-measures of President Johnson on January 1 for the protection of the dollar, which can in turn sharpen the developing battle and further aggravate the disequilibrium of the capitalist world.

Where Now Are the Spokesmen of the 'New Capitalism'?

General staffs are reputed to be always zealously engaged in preparing for the last war. Similarly the augurs of capitalism have been so obsessed with the nightmare memory of the world economic crisis of 1931, which exploded all their boasts of the supposed triumphant 'stabilisation' of capitalism after the First World War, that they have devoted their main attention and energies, and sought to promote every possible measure, including the notorious Keynesian formulas for continuous inflation as the magic panacea, to hold at bay the menace of the repetition of that particular nightmare. Consequently when two decades after the last war passed without any such repetition, with no comparably steep rising curve of mass unemployment, and instead with a considerable degree of

capitalist boom and expansion of production, these augurs triumphantly proclaimed the emergence of a 'new' 'crisis-free' capitalism (just as their predecessors did in the late nineteen-twenties), which had overcome the old contradictions, disproved Marxism once again, and was providing a glowing vista of welfare and ever rising standards for all. The invincible triumphs of the American economic Colossus, of Britain's Welfare State, of the West German 'Economic Miracle'—these became the theme songs of the new gospel. Marxism was once again disproved. Where are these voices today?

Gathering Materials for Explosion

What these augurs of 'crisis-free' capitalism failed to take into account was that each succeeding phase of the continuously developing general crisis of capitalism has its own distinctive features and is never a mere mechanical repetition of the preceding phase. The cyclical movement of ups and downs, 'recoveries' and 'recessions', has indeed continued during these two decades, but within the larger context of the deepening contradictions of the general crisis of capitalism. While the augurs were triumphing in the avoidance of the specific features of the world economic crisis of 1931, they were failing to take sufficiently into account and draw together the significance of the specific new features of the contradictions in the present phase: the continuously advancing inflation, stimulated by government action; the debasement of the currencies; the deepening gulf between the exploiting advanced capitalist countries in the imperialist sector and the impoverished semi-colonial and ex-colonial countries constituting the majority of the non-socialist world; the disequilibrium and changing relations of Western Europe and the United States, and of Britain and the Common Market; the economic consequences of neo-colonialism; the artificial maintenance of dollar domination with sterling as a weak ally, on a basis of holding down the price of gold to one third the price advance of other commodities, thus creating a world currency shortage to compel the holding of dollars as the world currency; and the instability of sterling through the attempt to maintain a world imperialist role without adequate economic basis. All these were gathering materials for explosion at the very time when the prophets of the 'new' 'crisis-free' capitalism were singing its praises. And this is only to take account of the direct economic factors, to which must be added the increasingly destructive costs of the colonialist wars (the current £12,000 million annual costs of the Vietnam war reaching to levels

only comparable with world war costs) and the soaring arms race. It is a measure of the confusion of understanding of this situation that some theorists of capitalism tried to see in this colossal military expenditure a stabilising factor helping to bolster up the economy instead of an additional disorganising factor.

‘Catastrophe on a Global Scale’?

Consequently all the prophets of the miraculous ‘new capitalism’, and in the forefront the Ministers of the Wilson Labour Government, buoyed up by millennial visions of the technological revolution bringing universal rising standards, full employment, and ever extending welfare, without the necessity of ending class society, were caught unprepared and staggered and panic-stricken when, despite all their efforts for three years to shore up the economy in accordance with the traditional formulas and recipes of finance-capitalist wisdom, the present explosion burst upon them with the collapse of sterling, enforced devaluation, the gold rush expressing the loss of confidence in all currencies, the shaking of the dollar, and the grim offensive proclaimed by President Johnson on the New Year of 1968 to seek to save the dollar and right the US balance of payments at the cost of disorganising the economies of all the other capitalist countries. No wonder that now at last the ‘experts’ of capitalism, awakening from their complacent dreams of triumph of having exorcised the old nightmare of 1931 by their modern methods of manipulation, have begun to open their eyes to see with horror in these new mounting contradictions the spectre of a possible new type of world economic crisis.

It needs no very great exercise in imagination to foresee a possible outcome in which the US retires to an aggressive isolationism, Europe turns in entirely upon itself, monetary restrictions mount, world trade declines and the under-developed world sinks still further into poverty and resentment. The result would clearly be a catastrophe on a global scale, but it would also defer if it did not blast hopes for Britain’s economic recovery. (*The Financial Times*, January 5, 1968.)

There is a real danger that the measures announced from the LBJ ranch on New Year’s Day will check world growth. . . . ‘The situation was already dicey,’ says one Washington expert, ‘these measures will probably make it even more so’. (*The Observer*, January 7, 1968.)

The axe that President Johnson swung at everybody on Monday will do a lot of damage around the world. . . . The action they have taken seems in particular to have been triggered off by Britain’s economic failure. (*The Economist*, January 6, 1968.)

We asked a moment ago: Where now are the New Fabian prophets of the 'new' 'crisis-free' capitalism, the Croslands and the Jenkins? The answer is plain. They are engaged in government office to devise measures to cut the social services and the programmes of the welfare state; to increase unemployment and maintain it at a permanent 'acceptable' level; and to reduce real wages and living standards.

United States, Organiser and Disorganiser

There is one respect in which the interwar experience provides a certain parallel with the present experience. After the devastation and impoverishment of the European countries through the First World War, the United States, which had only come in at the end and had reaped gigantic profits, extended its financial penetration and domination in Western Europe through the Dawes Plan and the Young Plan, and thus appeared as the 'saviour' and 'guardian angel' restoring the 'stabilisation' of capitalism in Western Europe. In these Notes in March 1925 on 'The Gold Standard' we exposed the false basis of this temporary 'stabilisation', as being based on American credits, and predicted that, so soon as the payment of interest and amortisation, further complicated by reparations and war debts, would exceed the total of new dollar credits, this 'stabilisation' would crash. This duly happened; and John Strachey wrote in the Fifteenth Anniversary issue of this magazine in July 1936, describing the 'bitterness' of a prominent London University economic lecturer speaking to him in the autumn of 1931, after Britain had gone off the gold standard, and complaining: 'To think that I should live to see the *Labour Monthly* Notes coming true.' As the devastating effects of the New York stock crash of the autumn of 1931 extended throughout the world, the guardian angel had become the destroying angel.

Western Europe and the United States

Once again a comparable version of this experience has been repeated in the modern period. Once again in the Second World War, as in the First, the United States came in the last of the great powers, after the European countries had been mauled and devastated, and reaped even more gigantic profits, and then once again after the war intervened as the 'saviour' and as the 'guardian angel' to restore capitalism in Western Europe, this time through the Marshall Plan. This time the American financial penetration and domination was

carried very much further, with accompanying military occupation of the West European countries reduced to the position of satellites. During these initial years after the Marshall Plan the overwhelming superiority and predominance of the United States was so much taken for granted in the capitalist world as an inevitable fact of life that Stalin startled contemporary assumptions when already in 1952, in his last work 'Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR', he predicted that Britain and France would eventually revolt against United States domination:

Take, first of all, Britain and France. Undoubtedly they are imperialist countries. . . . Can it be assumed that they will endlessly tolerate the present situation, in which, under the guise of 'Marshall Plan aid', Americans are penetrating into the economies of Britain and France and trying to convert them into adjuncts of the United States economy? . . . Would it not be truer to say that capitalist Britain, and, after her, capitalist France will be compelled in the end to break from the embrace of the USA and enter into conflict with it in order to secure an independent position and of course high profits?

That prediction was made sixteen years ago. Since then we have seen, in accordance with the law of unequal capitalist development, the diminution of the disparity between the economic levels of the capitalist countries of Western Europe and the United States. We have seen the open economic, financial and political revolt of France under De Gaulle against US domination. And the conditions are ripening in Britain, with the extending fight for a new orientation of policy, to make a corresponding advance to restore Britain's independence and end the role of Britain as satellite of US imperialism. This is the international significance of the battle of the left and all progressive forces now developing in Britain.

Guardian Angel and Destroying Angel

Once again, with President Johnson's New Year programme, the guardian angel has become the destroying angel. The organiser of Western Europe has become the disorganiser.

The stated object of President Johnson's cuts is to improve America's balance of payments by a massive \$3,000 million in the year ahead. If America achieved this, it would mean, under the present world currency system, that all other countries' balances of payments (taken together) would have to deteriorate by \$3,000 million a year. And the strains that this would create round the world would be immense. (*The Economist*, January 6, 1968.)

The jungle fight of monopoly capitalism is in the open again. The music of the mythical 'new capitalism' of universal benevolence is

muted. Each monopoly capitalist grouping is trying to right its own balance of payments at the expense of the others. Each is trying to extend its exports and limit its imports. The result can only lead to universal economic deterioration.

Law of the Jungle

The issue within each country is passionately presented in terms of 'Ourselves First'. 'Back Britain!' 'Back the United States!' 'Back France!' 'Back West Germany!' It is indeed high time to advance from this jungle to a new social order, based on collective ownership of the means of production, and equal exchange of mutual benefit, which can alone end this jungle and replace it by a real crisis-free socialist society of universal continuously rising standards and conditions. And it is the deeper significance of the present fight of the trade unions, the most active representatives of the labour movement and all progressive sections of the people to defeat the offensive which is being waged against the people by the coalition of the Wilson Labour Cabinet, the Tories and the bankers that this is not only a fight for the immediate living needs of the people, but is at the same time mobilising that broad alliance of the left capable of bringing about the decisive changes in policy needed and advancing to the new social order which can alone finally solve the problems of the British people.

The Real Backers of Britain

It is characteristic of the manipulators of capitalist publicity to devise some 'new' stunt designed to conceal each successive stage of the crisis of their system and to hoodwink working people into passive acceptance of the ordinances of their masters. Who can forget the giant posters on every hoarding after the first world war depicting the then Leader of the Labour Party, J. R. Clynes, with the message 'The Gate to More—Produce More'? So the workers produced more, and from one to three million produced themselves out of a job for the next two decades—till war came to the rescue. Similarly today the ancient aim of the employers, long ago described in considerable detail in Marx's *Capital*, to enlarge the amount of unpaid labour-time extracted from the workers as their favourite solution for every crisis, is presented under the noble-sounding slogan 'Back Britain' in the hope of playing on the genuine patriotism and desire of good-hearted politically undeveloped workers or employees to serve their fellows. Seldom has any trick slogan so

shamelessly enshrined the opposite of the truth. For the policy for which the workers are called on to accept new sacrifices is the exact opposite of 'Backing Britain'. It is the policy to keep Britain the dependent satellite of the United States and the international bankers. It is the policy embodied in the signed 'Declaration of Intent' of November 23, 1966, by which Britain and all the affairs of Britain are to be placed on the dissecting board three times a year, in February, July and November, 1968, for examination by the managers of the International Monetary Fund, and if 'in the opinion of the Managing Director of the Fund' the results are deemed unsatisfactory, 'appropriate solutions' are to be carried out. It is the policy to squander Britain's production and resources for the service of a bankrupt imperialist foreign policy and suicidal nuclear aims and military commitments. Those who are fighting this policy; who are fighting to end Britain's satellite dependence on the United States and the international moneylenders, and to restore Britain's independence; who are fighting to end the waste of Britain's production and resources, and to develop them for the living needs and true interests of the people in harmony with the advancing peoples of the world—these are the real Backers of Britain.

R.P.D.

LABOUR MONTHLY

FORTY YEARS AGO

The capitalist offensive has been the school of the working class. The sanguine hopes, the easy confidence and inner weakness of the working-class movement in Britain in the post-war wave, have been exposed without mercy. The proletarian movement has been forced, as the price of failure, to go back on itself and learn in a hard school. . . . It is in this struggle that the steady, ever more complete and searching exposure of the reformist leadership before wider and wider masses has been taking place during over seven years, not only in the Labour Government of 1924, but even more in the General Strike of 1926; and it is in this struggle that the revolutionary consciousness of a growing mass-section of the working class has grown strong and ready to advance to a further stage of struggle to win from the domination of the reformist traitors the majority of the working class.

(From Notes of the Month, by R.P.D.,
Labour Monthly, February 1928.)

IN FORTHCOMING ISSUES . . .

BETTY AMBATIELOS on the fight for democracy in Greece
CELINE WHITTLETON on Oil and imperialist plans after Aden
SOLLY KAYE and MARGARET MORRIS on Government cuts
and the attack on living standards

DANGER TO DEMOCRACY IN INDIA

Dilip Bose

A LEGALLY constituted, constitutionally valid and elected on a majority basis government has been thrown out of office in an authoritarian manner by a fiat from the Governor of the state (called province under the old British raj) of West Bengal, for the simple crime that this government, called the United Front (UF) government, dared bring about a certain measure of relief and radical measures to ameliorate, at least partially, the almost intolerable conditions under sky-rocketing prices of foodstuff and other essential commodities, consequent on widespread blackmarketing and corruption.

But there is a method by which the ruling Congress party at the Centre is trying to oust not only the Left government in West Bengal but also other non-Congress governments in other states. A government run by the Indian monopolists in collaboration with foreign imperialist interests is resorting to the good old method of purchasing votes of weak and vacillating members of the State Assembly (i.e. the provincial legislature responsible for the governance of the state in general, except of course foreign, defence and such other Central matters) and other Tammany Hall tactics of nepotism, jobbery and corruption. The broadest democratic opinion and all the parties of the Left, inside and outside the Assembly, are fighting back to assert the basic tenets and rules of parliamentary democracy and on its outcome depends the future of democracy and democratic institutions in India.

Three state governments have been toppled—Manipur, Haryana and West Bengal—and the difference in approach demonstrates the very quandary of the ruling Congress party at the Centre (i.e. the all-Union government at New Delhi).

In Manipur between the two sections of the bourgeoisie in the Assembly, when one section decided to include the socialists and a communist in the proposed Cabinet and found itself in a majority, the Assembly, though already summoned, was kept in suspense till some of the wavering votes could be purchased to topple the coming somewhat progressive Ministry. This is, of course, unconstitutional as the Assembly had already been summoned.

In Haryana, purchase and counter-purchase of Assembly voters reached a stage when both the sides were evenly matched. To resolve the tangle, a mid-term poll has been ordered—no doubt the only correct democratic procedure under the circumstances. But the point to note is that in Haryana both the warring parties belong to the bourgeois (i.e. Congress or right-wing) camp with no progressive representation so that the ruling Congress party at the Centre stands to lose nothing either way by a mid-term election.

Punjab had a non-Congress progressive Ministry with Satypal Dang of the Communist Party of India as the Food Minister. Punjab is a surplus food-producing province (or state) and the good traders have so long minted money out of people's food. The new Ministry and its food department stopped this trading in people's food by the government of Punjab resorting to wholesale buying of food grains and building up a considerable reserve. This surplus food reserve was offered to the Centre for supply to the deficit provinces. This was no doubt very much opposed by the vested interests. The Ministry was readily dismissed by the Governor.

In West Bengal there is a constitutional deadlock which we shall presently relate. The only democratic solution should have been a mid-term poll, a demand now voiced by all sections of democratic opinion; but this the Congress party will surely resist to the last because *a mid-term election without doubt will lead to a considerable majority for the parties of the outgoing United Front government and West Bengal will be like another Kerala.*

In the 1967 general election in West Bengal, all the Left parties could not agree on a single list of candidates to oppose the then ruling Congress party in a straight contest. Instead there were two Left fronts, one led by the Communist Party of India (CPI) and the Bangla Congress (the leader of which, Ajoy Mukherjee, later became the Chief Minister of the UF government), and the other led by the CPI (Marxist) along with the Revolutionary Socialist party and others. This inevitably led to a considerable splitting of Left votes and confusion in other democratic circles. Even then the official Congress party could secure only 127 seats and the two other Left Fronts 151 seats in a house of 280. With four nominated seats for special reserve Anglo-Indian interests who pledged support to the Left fronts, the two Left fronts immediately combined to form the United Front government with Ajoy Mukherjee from the Bangla Congress as the chief Minister, Jyoti Basu of the CPI (Marxist) as the Deputy Chief Minister, Somnath Lahiri of the CPI

as Minister of Information, and Biswanath Mukherjee of the CPI and Harekrishna Konar of the CPI (Marxist) respectively, as Ministers of Irrigation and Land Revenue; the Labour Ministry was manned by Subodh Banerjee of the Socialist Unity Centre, while Sushil Dhara of the Bangla Congress, also its secretary, became the Minister for Industries.

The 18-point programme, which the UF government adopted, tried to tackle, among other things, two vital problems in relation to industry and agriculture. The trade union movement had long suffered from police interference. The new UF government immediately stopped police intervention in any dispute between the trade unions and the management or the owners, and thereby helped to restore some of the basic trade union rights of the working class, rights which are long since recognised as taken for granted in the British trade union and working-class movement.

In the field of agriculture and land relations, the basic rights of the sharecroppers (poor peasants who work on the land of the rich peasants and are entitled to get a share of the produce) not to be evicted from the land they till, was ensured.

It is obvious that both these moves by the UF government affected the vested interests behind the ruling Congress party at the Centre and a great hue and cry was raised that law and order had broken down in West Bengal.

One of the main points of the 18-point programme in relation to food was the banning of private wholesale trade in food grains. This was not easy as the main winter crop of 1966-67 was already in the hands of private wholesalers (themselves rich peasants or kulaks, called jotedars), when the new UF Ministry assumed power in March, 1967. The jotedars now started creating every difficulty to make the rationing system unworkable in the towns and hoarded the stock of rice to make its price go rocketing upwards. The Congress government at the Centre also added to the difficulty by withholding part of the promised supply of rice from the Centre to the state of West Bengal.

It must be noted in passing that even when the price of rice shot up to as high as almost five rupees per kilogram and certainly on an average nowhere below three rupees a kilogram, people girded up their loins and did not create any 'trouble' for the UF government. Be it noted that the 48-hour continuous general strike and complete stoppage (with the exception of the essential services, like ambulance, fire brigade, milk supply and medical services),

called hartal or bandh, on November 22-23 and again on November 30 *are not on any economic issue, but a sharp expression of clear-cut political battle against the undemocratic way in which the Congress party is trying to stage a come-back in this province through Dr. P. C. Ghosh,* the ex-Food Minister of the now dismissed UF Ministry.*

Ever since the installation of the UF government many nefarious attempts were made to discredit and dislodge it. The traditional game of the old British imperialist administration was to foster communal troubles and riots, i.e. strife between Hindus and Muslims or between one community and another, to disrupt the democratic and particularly the working-class movement. The same was tried on two occasions this summer, but in both the cases the swift action of the UF Ministers, displaying a good deal of courage in seeking popular support and co-operation, helped to nip it in the bud.

Then last September when the UF Cabinet, ignoring and overruling the Food Minister P. C. Ghosh's pro-jotedar food policy, was taking rather drastic measures to get at the people's food, the Congress party at the Centre along with the Governor Dharam Vira (a retired member of the old Indian Civil Service, the main prop of the British imperialist administration in India and taken over by the Congress after transfer of power) tried to wean away the Chief Minister Ajoy Mukherjee with scare stories about Chinese infiltration with the 'help' of the Left CPI (i.e. the CPI Marxist) members.

This first attempt to topple the UF government on October 2 could be foiled by the united strength of the traditional left-orientated mass movement in West Bengal led by the two Communist parties.

Then by mid-November, P. C. Ghosh resigned from the Cabinet as Food Minister and claimed that he had the support of 17 other members of the state Assembly, who were not supporting the UF government. This gave Governor Dharam Vira the plea to declare that the UF Cabinet had lost its majority support in the Assembly. Whether such a majority support has been lost by the UF Cabinet

* Dr. P. C. Ghosh is an ex-member of the old Working Committee of the Conservative Gandhian Congress when the then Bengal Provincial Congress Committee under Subhas Bose's presidency was under joint left and communist leadership. In 1947 he was made the chief Minister of West Bengal but shortly after dismissed to make room for the late Dr. B. C. Roy, another member of the Congress Working Committee, in whom the foreign monopolists, particularly the British and other Marwari interests, had greater faith. Dr. P. C. Ghosh had then retired from active political life and only came back in the 1967 general election to get elected as an 'independent' with Left support. His constituency since his defection from the UF has challenged him in several large meetings to seek re-election.

could only be tested in a full session of the Assembly which the Chief Minister Ajoy Mukherjee wanted to convene by December 18. (It must be noted that according to the rules of procedure of the Assembly, the Chief Minister need not have convened the Assembly till February 1968, i.e. till the expiry of six months after the date of the last session of the Assembly which was in August.)

The Governor refused to accept this position and arbitrarily dismissed the UF Ministry on November 21 at 8 p.m. even when he was already in possession by 4 p.m. of a communication from the Chief Minister Ajoy Mukherjee that the latter would reconsider the earlier convening of the Assembly in his Cabinet meeting of November 23. P.C. Ghosh, the leader of the 17 members, with whom he formed the grandiose 'Progressive Democratic Front', was immediately sworn in the very moment after the dismissal of the UF Ministry, with Khagen Das Gupta, the leader of the Congress Assembly party, declaring his support to P. C. Ghosh.

Why this unseemly haste? Because Dharam Vira could find out by November 21 that even the 17 defectors from the UF were likely to 'defect' again back to the UF under the tremendous mass pressure that was brought to bear upon them by the mass movement outside the legislature.

The issue involved here in this undemocratic authoritarian procedure adopted by the Governor is nothing other than the simple question—whether the Governor acts on the advice of his Cabinet Ministers or independently. Britain has a constitutional monarchy. Does the British Monarch act independently and irrespective of the wishes of her Cabinet? If the Governor in a state Assembly or the President of India were to act independently of his Cabinet, will it not be a step towards authoritarianism?

This development towards authoritarianism is being and will be resisted by all democrats and communists. As Spain once proved the first broadest mobilisation and battleground for democracy against the fascist onslaught in the 'thirties, so here in West Bengal, round the question whether a mid-term poll takes place in the near future to solve this impasse in the only democratic way possible, will take place the broadest mobilisation of all democrats and democratic movement with the communists taking their full share in such a movement. We are confident that we will win.

APPENDIX

Since the dismissal of the United Front Government on November 21, 1967, a reign of police terror has been let loose in West Bengal. Over 6,000 people have been arrested, twelve people, including young boys, have been shot dead,

thousands of men and women have been mercilessly beaten up in the streets, inside university buildings, in their homes and in police lock-ups.

The facts of police brutality given below are but a fraction of the total horrifying reality, of which barely a word has appeared in the British press. A committee set up to defend democracy in West Bengal reports: 'They have put even the colonial atrocities of the British to shame.'

'At 4.50 p.m. on November 22, 1967, a jeep decorated with flags of various parties came to the Parade Ground near the Victoria Memorial. On it were standing Ex-Minister Biswanath Mukherjee and Amar Chakraborty . . . At 4.55 p.m. ten policemen on horseback attacked the jeep. Hundreds of policemen on foot armed with sticks followed them up with wild shouts. Next moment we could only see the rise and fall of hundreds of sticks . . . After a few minutes most of the leaders were rolling on the ground in pain. Even in that condition they were beaten with sticks and kicks.'

(Eye-witness report in *The Dainik Basumati*, November 23, 1967)

'On November 24 the police savagely attacked the Central Students' Demonstration in front of the Calcutta University. Hundreds of teenagers were severely beaten up and at least five were killed.'

(*The Dainik Basumati*, November 25)

From Goutam Chattopadhyay, Professor and Head of the Department of History, Surendranath College for Women, Calcutta:

'Out of twenty teachers who were present in the Raja Peary Mohan College, Uttarpara on December 16, eighteen were injured severely by the wanton assault of the police, the Vice-Principal was beaten black and blue and over fifty battered students lay groaning on the hard floor of the two hospitals of Uttarpara, largely uncared for . . . A bearer of the college was hurled downstairs from the balcony of the second floor and as I write his life hangs in the balance . . . We were taken to the college, which was in police custody for several hours on 16th. We saw the broken gate and smashed doors and bloody finger-prints everywhere on the walls . . . The office looked like a house after an earthquake—furniture broken, files ransacked. The college canteen was smashed up. The Principal's telephone was battered and broken. There were clots of blood in all these rooms and even in the pages of the telephone-guide.'

From Kiran Gupta, Principal of the Raja Peary Mohan College:

'I was a Congressman and I have seen police terror in the '30s and in '42. But never have I seen such cold-blooded brutality. . . This is what they have done to my boys and my colleagues in this 20th year of freedom.'

SCOTTISH NATIONALISM

Winifred Ewing, M.P.

(Following on the contribution from Gwynfor Evans, M.P. on Welsh Nationalism in our December, 1967 issue, we have pleasure in printing this statement. We reaffirm our view that it is vital for all sections of the working-class and socialist movement to understand with sympathy the aspirations and outlook of the Scottish and Welsh Nationalist movements.—Ed., LM)

FOR an increasing proportion of the people of Scotland, Nationalism is a matter both of moral principle and of political necessity.

Not surprisingly, the moral principle is what the opponents of Nationalism neither answer nor, to be honest, seem able to recognise. The various statements, arguments, or sheer inventions which make up the unionist (with a small 'u'—the capital letter makes the word the old-fashioned name for Scottish Tory) case against national freedom for Scotland are always based on what used to be called bread-and-butter politics. That these arguments have all been answered time and time again does not seem to cast any doubt into the minds of their retailers. But presumably the trotting out of old arguments at this level is easier than to say—as an honest unionist would really have to say—that although Scotland is a nation, with a long history of civilisation and a large share in the thinking which has brought the present stage of democracy in the United Kingdom, she still ought not to have the freedom to run her own affairs which every other free nation in the world assumes as a matter of course.

That nations should govern themselves has always seemed to our politicians a self-evident truth when applied to their own rather artificial 'nation' of Britain, and to what used to be called—before Britain was cut to size by history—the 'other great powers'. The principle was by no means so clearly seen by these same politicians when it was said by those who were, temporarily and for reasons which were, though historical, rarely very creditable to the United Kingdom, under that Empire's control. It may partly have been a matter of colour and race; white people had a right to freedom, the lesser breeds had to accept the rather different principles which were applied to them by the favoured—and minority—paler section of humanity. But this is an over-simplification, as the case of Scotland shows very clearly. With whatever groanings and subterfuges, the Westminster machinery disgorged its control of countless nations

and peoples; but still holds it as irrefutable that there is no moral case, no matter of human dignity, affecting the still subordinate status of a nation only a few hundred miles from the centre of that Empire.

Of course, those in Scotland who had long been used to consider London the centre of their political ambitions as well as the source of all political action and initiative, found no difficulty in making and defending this assumption. Indeed, some of them have gone on record as distrusting their own countrymen to such an extent that what Scotland might do with freedom is to them so fear-laden a thought that they would not trust her with that freedom if it were up to them to do so. This is why the present Labour and Tory MPs for Scottish constituencies are increasingly helpless in the face of the changing pattern of politics in their own country. What has happened in the last few years is nothing less than the re-awakening of a nation.

No wonder the London-based politicians are bewildered. The questions now being asked, the policies now being looked for, are—as in any other nation—those relevant to Scotland. Scotland as a nation is awakening to her needs, her responsibilities, her failures and her opportunities. To none of these does it seem to her that any answer is to be found in the margin left over for Scotland in the policies and programmes of the London parties. The danger of a disenchantment with politics—real enough, it would seem, in England, and all the more reasonable a happening in Scotland in view of many years of empty promises and social neglect which seemed unchanged whichever party was in power—has been avoided in Scotland because of the existence of a fully organised National Party. People who, in the new awakening of the sense of national identity in Scotland, found themselves looking for a political weapon to achieve the results they sought and thought essential for national survival and national prosperity, found that instrument ready, disciplined, and equipped for the task.

Scotland has to thank men still among the leaders of the Scottish National Party for that fact. During the years since the Scottish National Party was founded, the great principles on which successful nationalism has to be based were kept firmly in front of members and supporters. The means of success had to be political, and that meant the contesting of elections until the personnel and the policies of government were both changed in Scotland. Scotland had to be persuaded not simply to recognise and criticise the damaging

policies applied to her by a far-away parliament in which she was in a permanent minority, but also to accept the responsibility for her own affairs which other nations possessed and took for granted. As one of the great opponents of the Union of Scotland with England is quoted as saying over two and a half centuries ago, 'We seek for our own nation no more—but assuredly no less—than we would defend as the right of any other nation'. The *quotation* may well be inaccurate; the *principle* is still basic to Nationalism in Scotland.

Part of the reason for the failure of our opponents adequately to gauge the moral and instinctive choice of freedom which lies behind the growing power of the National Party in Scotland is simply that the party itself has never laid its main emphasis on this in propaganda and policy statements. This is not to assert that it was absent. The principle of all Nationalist arguments for freedom is and has always been 'Scotland is the responsibility of the Scottish people; because we have refused to accept, or rather to reassert that responsibility, we experience as a nation the shameful conditions which now exist'.

But having made that assumption, Nationalist speakers and writers have always gone on simply to underline the disastrous effect on Scotland of refusing to carry out her duty of self-government. This was by no means used as 'hate the government' ammunition; governments in London were, and rightly, blamed for the neglect of Scotland; after all, London governments claimed to be United Kingdom governments, and if they acted—as in most matters they did—simply as English governments when it came to priorities, planning, and interest, then even on their own professed political purposes they were open to Scottish criticism. But Nationalists have always preferred simply to discover and demonstrate how badly Scotland was served by the existing political system, and point the moral that she had little right to expect anything better if she refused to recognise the only possible political answer to problems themselves essentially political in origin. Scotland suffers because she has no government of her own. A Scottish government is the answer to the basic illness of Scotland. A government in Scotland would plan and act in the interests of Scotland, on the basis of Scottish conditions and the needs of the people of Scotland.

This underlines the real purpose of the Nationalist voters in Scotland, as it underlines the real argument for freedom in practical rather than moral terms. A nation without a government lacks the machinery to deal with the social, economic, and political problems with which she is faced. The first step towards governing is to

have the government under your own national control. National freedom is what makes politics possible. Until politics in that sense—as the method and mechanism of social change and economic progress—are made possible by the establishment of the machinery and independence of a separate government, then to talk about choosing policies for Scotland is largely imaginary and delusive.

To Nationalists, the policies applied to Scotland now are governed essentially by the economic problems and resulting political priorities of the United Kingdom, meaning England. Scottish economic circumstances are different; the policies followed by a Scottish government are therefore going to be different too. Scotland is an export-surplus country; she still has to endure the squeeze policies designed for her export-deficit 'partner'. Scotland's housing situation is of crisis and tragic proportions; she still has to accept that expenditure on housing is governed by the overall programme for the United Kingdom.

Scotland is gravely hampered by poor communications; she still has to accept a road and rail policy—if policy is a possible description—framed by English politicians for English circumstances and applied to Scotland as if she was a rather backward county of England.

Scotland has had an unemployment rate for most post-war years of double the United Kingdom average; nobody in Scotland is convinced that Government policies take any real account of this when it comes to the deliberate creation of unemployment for economic reasons—or rather arguments—supremely irrelevant to her own situation.

If a nation is for long years governed as if it were a province, then its rulers become provincial in the pejorative sense. One of the tragedies of the 'Scottish' politicians is that they accept that their nation should be treated as a second-rate entity, and by so doing condemn themselves to think and speak and plan at that level. Their English colleagues sense this, and realise, as they have for long enough, that the Scottish representatives in Westminster are content to be second-class citizens there, just as they are content to see their countrymen treated as second-class citizens in every programme and every plan of the government.

Scotland is no longer content with provincial status. She wants not just the dignity of freedom, not just the responsibility of free nationhood once again; she is also choosing that those who speak for her shall have Scotland as their first loyalty, and the welfare of the people of Scotland as their first concern.

THE ARTS TODAY

Edited by Stuart Douglass

A DECLARATION OF INTENT

by a poet

“Tomorrow, for the young, the poets exploding like bombs.”
(W. H. Auden, ‘Spain’, 1937)

Norman Hidden is Senior Lecturer in English at the College of All Saints, Tottenham, N.17. He is a member of the General Council and the Executive Committee of the Poetry Society. At one time a Labour Party Parliamentary candidate and former borough councillor, he now devotes himself to his work in education and to helping forward the ‘poetry revolution’. He is founder of ‘Workshop Two’, which aims at ‘bringing writer and audience together’, and has just launched a new poetry magazine Workshop.



THE real literary disease of today is the creative writer's lack of audience: do you hear his screams of frustration, rage, despair? How can he relate the reality of his own inner world with the reality of an outside world distorted by commercialism? Commercial values have drenched art in the glossier kind of entertainment. Between the arts and entertainment there should be a marriage—there is today no marriage but a rape.

I started 'Workshop Two' because of the need to bring about a direct involvement of writers and audience, by means of a non-profit-making organisation, which would exist for writers and audience only.

Such an organisation should aim to make poetry as exciting to the people but truer in its values than commercial entertainment. In the process poetry itself will become not an isolated academic exercise but a creative and non-commercial form of entertainment. As it once was in its popular origins.

I believe that this can be done only if we bring the public and the artist, that is the consumer and the creator, into a personal (i.e. direct) relationship. And that this should be developed, at all levels, and on a vast scale.

I would like poetry to be everywhere—happening in life as well as on the printed page—a sense of *awareness* in relation to all things.

Through 'Workshop Two' I am trying to encourage other arts, especially music, dance, graphic design, lighting and so on, to meet with poetry, to cross-fertilise, to produce exciting new combinations.

I would like to explore the ways in which science can stimulate the arts and in which the arts can give added meaning to the sciences.

In general terms I want to see a breakthrough which will formulate a new attitude to the arts, to creativity in general, and in literature one that is positive to the society of the future.

I would like writers, through co-operatives, to be able to control their own means of expression.

I would like them to say, quite unanimously: we are against the profit-motive, war, all manifestations of apartheid and the commercial exploitation of artists.

I myself would add that I accept creativity in all its forms. I oppose any restraints that shackle, crush, or inhibit creativity. But I accept self-restraint (in political terms, democratic discipline) where self-restraint leads to creativity.

And to symbolise all this, I want a World Poetry Day as a public holiday and carnival of the arts.

NORMAN HIDDEN

ART

Jack
Lindsay

MEDITATION ON JOSEF HERMAN *

JOSEF HERMAN, born in Warsaw in 1911, arrived in England in 1940; a visit to Wales in 1944 led him to a mountain-valley and he found his roots there; he became known for his drawings and paintings of the miners; and from there he has gone ahead with his depictions of men at many kinds of work or at rest from work. Clearly, despite all the differences, he belongs to the tradition of Courbet, Millet, Daumier, Van Gogh, Cezanne. He has been influenced by Permeke in Belgium; has felt at home in the Flemish tradition and deeply loved and studied Rembrandt; has been stirred by the monumental richness of Byzantine art and thus has some links with Rouault. But when one has said these obvious things, how far has one got inside him?

First, we need to examine, more thoroughly than has yet been done, what the discovery of the common man, especially the worker, has meant to modern art. It began with the French Revolution and involved much more than the taking-in of new subject-matter. New subjects, if truly grasped, imply a new vision and new technical means. The workers in the pictures of the artists named above show a new orientation and identification of the self, which involves new aesthetic issues as much as new social sympathies.

*Josef Herman, *Paintings and Drawings*, (Evelyn Adams and Mackay), 46 pp, with 8 colour plates, 82 tone, 70s.

Secondly it follows that a new relation to the earth is present, a new implication with natural process. It was no accident that the plebeian Turner, fascinated by the spectacle of men at work and struggling with the elements, was the first painter consciously realising art as activity; that is, he felt the essential thing to be the act of creation, not the finished product. Thus his method was dynamically linked with the world of process that he sought to catch and re-express.

Along such lines we can begin to get inside Herman and understand his import. His emotional self-identification with the men and women he paints determines his aesthetic. The deepest value lies in labour, through which men become dialectically one with natural process. But the labour, existing in a world of distorting alienation, is also a crushing weight. Herman's workers always bear this dual mark, and yet the last word is with the positive aspect. The powerful bodies (powerful in themselves and in the simplicity of their realised mass) are almost as much a part of the earth as the rocks and trees. This point has been noted before. But it means little unless we also see that the weight of gravity so relentlessly pulling them to earth is also a spiritual quality born out of their labour. It is a natural piety, unconscious perhaps in the men, but inherent in their whole being; it defines that in the situation which denies

(Continued on page 74)



THREE HEADS OF MINERS

pen and wash drawing, 1948 (*Collection, Dr. H. Roland*)



JOSEF HERMAN

(Continued from page 71)

and defies alienation, and looks to a different world, in which humanity is fully realised.

This pull of gravity, this natural piety, is defined in the forms and the composition, but equally in the colour with its layers of glazes, the harmonies linked with both Byzantine transfiguration and the immediate revelations of the dusk—‘the hour of transformation’ as the poets of the 18th century knew: the phrase is from Ann Radcliff. The hour when toil and homecoming meet, and the discords of the day are momentarily resolved as the whole face of nature changes.

And so, the more I look at Herman’s works, the more I feel that he truly carries into our day the fused romantic and realist traditions of the last century. And this raises a further point: how does this definition relate to a world of industrialism? From a superficial angle, it could be argued that Herman is evading the machine and its entanglements; but though his answer to the problem is not the only one possible, it is a valid answer, I believe, and one that is badly needed. Meditating on his achievement, I feel driven to the conclusion that the nature and the place of Cubism have never been got quite in the right focus. Movement in time and place is certainly a highly important issue for our art; and it is one that was first openly posited by Turner, who often merged different time-moments in a single image: for example by a conflict of aerial and spatial perspective in *Rain, Steam and Speed*, and by much more complex methods in other works. Cubism isolated this problem and gave an abstract, an analytic answer; and because it thus cut the artist away from the world into a closed circuit of his own perceptions, it also paradoxically delivered him up to the non-human world of the machines of

movement-structure abstractly considered. Here seems to me the cul-de-sac which is becoming more and more crowded, but still owns no way out on its own terms. (Surely the reason why Picasso didn’t stay on to ‘develop’ Cubism was because he felt that to ‘develop’ it was to be imprisoned in an ever-narrowing machine-world?) This is not to say that Cubism can be ignored; but I feel that the artist has to enter it in order to come out in the opposite direction—to realise afresh the potentialities of the Cubist Moment or Crisis and develop them in a concrete way.

I have raised here a large question, or perhaps rather have merely stuck a finger in a hornet’s nest; but I had to make the heretical statement in order to add that I feel Herman is one of the very artists who have come out ‘in the opposite direction’, and that as a result he is a genuinely revolutionary artist, not a conformist to the new academicism. His work is post-cubist, that is, it is aware of cubist space and belongs to the world of industrialism; but it takes none of the easy solutions.

Let me attempt to sum up a complex matter in a few phrases. Herman is concerned to define and express man, but always sees man in relation to the earth. That relation appears as one of work, even if the moment is of rest; and because the man at work or rest is not an abstract conception, but is the man of here and now, he is also involved in the processes of alienation. Because of this unity and fullness of realisation, the aesthetic problem of volume and mass is felt also as a problem of spiritual gravity; and the rhythms and the colour-harmonies, concretely arising from the given moment of work or rest, communicate to the pictorial image both an acceptance of life as it is, and a sense of the transformative energies active at its core.

Barbara
Morris

WILLIAM MORRIS AS DESIGNER*

WILLIAM MORRIS (1834-1896), poet, designer and socialist, has, in the last two decades become almost a household word. His designs, some over a hundred years old, are once more in current production and widely used. As Ray Watkinson stresses in his introduction, Morris 'belongs to our own time as much as to his, and nobody of his time is more worth the trouble of re-examination'.

Although, as the title suggests, the theme of Ray Watkinson's book is somewhat specialised, Morris's work as a designer is examined in the context of his whole approach to art and daily life, the two subjects being inseparable in Morris's mind. It was largely through his art that Morris became a socialist. In his autobiographical letter to Andreas Scheu, the Austrian revolutionary, (dated September 5, 1883) Morris writes that 'both my historical studies and my practical conflict with the philistinism of modern society have *forced* on me the conviction that art cannot have a real life and growth under the present system of commercialism and profit-mongering. I have tried to develop this view, which is in fact Socialism seen through the eyes of an artist, in various lectures, the first of which I delivered in 1878'. This point is again emphasised in Morris's essay on 'How I Became a Socialist' (1894). 'To sum up', he concludes, 'the study of history and the love and practice of art forced me into a hatred of the civilisation which, if things were to stop as they are, would turn history into inconsequent nonsense, and make art a collection of the curiosities of the past which would have no serious relation to the life of the present'.

Although Morris's socialist activities are mentioned only *en passant*, a sense of Morris's social commitment runs through the whole book this being most apparent in the chapter on the firm. To Morris the joy of creation was as important as the end product: 'To give people pleasure in the things they must perforce *use*, that is the one great office of decoration; to give people pleasure in the things they must perforce *make*, that is the other use of it'. (*The Lesser Art*, 1877.) In an interesting and detailed study of the work of the firm of Morris and Company, Ray Watkinson points out the change that was brought about in 1875 when Morris virtually took sole charge of the firm. In the first ten years or so, the firm relied

* *Studio Vista*, 144 pp., 70s.

mainly on direct commissions, but thereafter Morris, partly for financial reasons, turned more to general trading, in an effort to reach a wider public. It is true that, largely through his exacting standards, Morris's designs were out of the range of the working class but, as Ray Watkinson rightly emphasises, Morris was still concerned to sell to the general public as best he could. As well as the prohibitively expensive tapestries, hand-knotted carpets, elaborate embroideries and costly silks, the firm produced relatively cheap Kidderminster and Wilton carpets (woven by outside firms), printed cottons, wallpapers and cotton damasks and the well-known Sussex chairs which even as late as 1914 were selling at 10s. apiece. A range of small domestic and decorative wares—*grès de Flandres*, Italian pottery, Indian goods and the simple table glass designed by Philip Webb—was also available. It is also worth pointing out that Morris at no time equated beauty with luxury; the concept of the beauty of simplicity, within the reach of all, occurs again and again in his lectures and writings—whitewashed walls, a sanded floor and the barest necessities of furniture, what Morris considered the 'very foundation of refinement'.

The widespread misconceptions of Morris's attitude to the machine are also dealt with by Ray Watkinson. It was not the machines themselves that Morris objected to, but their misuse. In one of his 'Commonweal' pamphlets, *The Aims of Art* (1887), he states 'the true secret of happiness lies in taking a genuine interest in all the details of daily life, in elevating them by art instead of handing the performance of them over to unregarded drudges, and make them interesting, or to lighten them by the use of machinery, so as to make the labours of them trifling'. Similarly, a truly socialist concept emerges in his essays on *Useful Work versus Useless Toil* (1884) and *A Factory as it Might Be* where he envisages a factory as a centre of intellectual activity, offering opportunities for a full and eager social life. Such ideas he endeavoured to put into practice in his own workshops at Merton Abbey, established in 1881.

It is perhaps not surprising that one of the most illuminating chapters in Ray Watkinson's book is that on printing and typography in general. He emphasises that the making of books at his own press was the great joy of Morris's last years, an activity taken up primarily for his own pleasure. The lavish productions of the Kelmscott Press were not books to be read on the train, but books to read at leisure in one's own home, to be enjoyed and cherished as works of art in their own right. Alongside this, Ray Watkinson sets the care with which Morris

selected the printer and type for his books that were commercially printed so that he was able to say that his novel, *The Roots of the Mountains*, published by the Chiswick Press in 1889, was the best-looking book since the seventeenth century. It was Morris's general stand on printing and typography, perhaps even more than the actual productions of the Kelmscott Press, that was a major influence in raising the standards of book design and typography, both at home and abroad.

Ray Watkinson's book is also invaluable in that it discusses Morris in the context of his predecessors, his contemporaries and his followers, establishing his position as a true pioneer in modern attitudes to design, not dismissing him as a romantic medievalist and outmoded artist-craftsman. The illustrations are also one of the most valuable aspects of the book for they cover not only the complete range of Morris's artistic activity, but also include comparative examples of the work of his contemporaries. It is therefore all the more a pity that the quality of some of the colour plates, marred by an overemphasis of blue and a slight fuzziness, does not do justice to the crispness and clarity of Morris's designs. Nevertheless it presents a far more comprehensive and valuable visual summary of Morris's work than in other books recently published.

We have pleasure in announcing that EDGELL RICKWORD, distinguished poet and satirist, will be writing in our March issue on Public Poetry and Social Advance.

In view of the current interest aroused by the appointment of Cecil Day-Lewis as Poet Laureate, readers will find this article of special importance.

THEATRE

Stuart
Douglass

TYNAN RIGHT AND LEFT *

KENNETH TYNAN IS A RARE ANALYST of contemporary drama, rare principally because he believes that when drama becomes a palliative it is dead, rarer still in that he supports the tenets of Brecht against all comers. For ten years he wrote in *The Observer* and elsewhere in support of plays that provoke and against those that indulge.

He has now served us up a large five-course meal of a book containing a selection of his writings, carefully blended, neatly spiced, highly digestible. It is about plays and films, people, places and events he has sat through, talked with, been to and reported on.

In his collected theatre reviews (well worth a second reading) one can trace the real character of a decade in which a 'break-through broke down'. Writers like Osborne and Wesker who 'broke through' the drawing-room curtain had their limitations. Tynan explains carefully what they were—and this is not in retrospect. This is

analysis-with-a-deadline — Sunday's issue.

Cogently he dismantles Pinter, Bart and Bolt and the rest in print, underlines their positive elements, sadly disparages the nebulous and signposts the way forward to a theatre of social consciousness.

If there are faults they lie in his apparent isolation from the outside forces that shaped drama during those years of disillusion-with-Labour and anger-at-the-Tories. But he avers that what was lacking in the new playwright was a purpose, and by implication, a socialist one.

He quotes Brecht as saying that his purpose of working in the theatre was to try to discover the best way for people to live together. The statement is simple, revolutionary and irrefutable, says Tynan: what else is theatre for?

Order this meal by all means. But don't pick at it. Savour it from start to finish.

It answers so many questions about a bewildering era of British drama that nearly made 'The Great Leap Forward'.

*Tynan Right and Left. Kenneth Tynan. *Longmans Green*, 480 pp., 50s.

Look Forward . . .

Ten years ago, in the March, 1958 Notes, R.P.D. analysed the work of John Osborne and other writers in a section titled 'Look Forward in Anger'. We shall be printing this still-apt survey next month as a contribution to the current controversy over the role and responsibility of the writer.

BRITAIN'S 'INVISIBLES'

Hugo Rathbone

LAST year there appeared two reports* on the mechanism of finance capital by which it extracts tribute from working peoples overseas. Both these reports deal with 'invisible' or monetary transactions as opposed to the import and export of goods (the 'visibles') from and to countries overseas. They are both notably defensive in character as overseas exploitation by imperialism has increasingly been attacked in the last fifty years by working people throughout the world.

The first book under review, *Effects of UK Investment Overseas*, is an interim report prepared at the request of the Confederation of British Industries (CBI), concentrating primarily on the profitability of these investments in each industry chosen. It was undertaken by W. B. Reddaway, a director of the Cambridge Department of Applied Economics along with three collaborators. Since its publication in March last year it became obvious that it had not borne out the expectation of the CBI that it would provide effective criticism of what they felt were the too restrictive measures taken by the Government against these investments. In fact such was their unease that in October they published a booklet,† summarising their doubts and objections before the issue of Reddaway's final report, promised for the autumn but now postponed till this spring. These doubts, etc., boil down to an admission that while the facts revealed and the criticisms may statistically be correct, yet the non-quantitative benefits from such investment have been too little assessed.

From all the mass of statistical data in this report one fact nevertheless stands out. In several cases the revealed profitability of the investments of some of the larger companies as in building materials—the highest listed—show an average of 22 per cent per year over the last nine years so that these companies got the full return and more of their investment in the short period of five years. This quite apart from the residual benefits that they may have derived from

* *Effects of UK Investment Overseas*: an interim Report. By W. B. Reddaway; Cambridge University Press, 25s. *Britain's Invisible Earnings*: a Report of the Committee on Invisible Exports. Director of the Study: William M. Clarke. British National Export Council, 45s.

† *Overseas Investment—Why and How*. Confederation of British Industries, 5s.

such investments which the CBI are at pains to point out are very material though statistically difficult to calculate.

Secondly—and much more importantly—Reddaway discloses the basic reason why imperialism clings so tenaciously to such overseas investment. As Reddaway says (p. 96) any enforced restriction of overseas investment would *not* result in any corresponding increase in productive investment at home, but only in 'non-industrial capital expenditure', or as the CBI puts it a little more clearly 'the internal alternative to overseas investment is more likely to be non-industrial investment' (p. 24 of their booklet). Precisely. Capitalism is against using its surplus capital in order to produce more goods at home above a certain level and so increase the standards of the masses, but instead exports any surplus capital overseas to increase its profits; Lenin pointed this out in his *Imperialism*; for otherwise, as he said, 'it would not be capitalism . . . as long as capitalism remains what it is surplus capital will never be utilised for the purpose of raising the standard of living in a given country for this would mean a decline in the profits for the capitalists: it will be used for the purpose of increasing these profits by exporting capital abroad. . . .' (Lenin: *Imperialism*. Vol. XIX of his Collected Works, 1942 edition, p. 136.)

The Reddaway enquiry is based on the investigation of some 52 large industrial concerns, accounting, says the report, for some three-quarters of all British investment in the industries chosen. Most of the body of the report is taken up with statistical arguments as to how much and how long the profit on these investments will continue and what is their benefit to the economy as a whole. The report excludes shipping and other transport, insurance, property development, construction, plantations and in part oil. These last two are promised further investigation in the final report.

While the report claims to be a representative presentation of the total profits from overseas of the dominant companies in the particular industries examined, for a more complete picture of the profits of all concerns with investments overseas we need to turn to the Government's own calculations of such profits. This is contained in the latest annual balance of payments statement dated 1967. The total of this form of tribute, levied as it is on working peoples overseas by British imperialism, amounted in 1966 to £940 m. This total had been steadily rising since a low point in 1946 of £162 m. following the Second World War to reach over the thousand limit for the first time in 1965 (£1,002 m.) but dropping

back as above in 1966 to £940 m., reflecting the crisis of 1964-66.‡

According to the latest estimates of the Bank of England the amount of long term capital invested overseas by private interests had reached in 1966 to a total of £9,600 m. and if short term capital is also included to £14,097 m. It is on this huge total of private assets that the now close on a £1,000 m. has come to be 'earned' by British capitalist interests from their exploitation of people overseas.

But this indeed is not the end of the story. First there is still to be added the enormous exploitation by imperialism of these peoples arising in their visible trade, when for instance the price of the raw materials they mostly export declines due to circumstances beyond their control on the world market, while the cost of manufactured goods they must import continues to rise; this is confirmed by both unofficial and official sources, e.g. the United Nations itself. The result is that while the richer nations grow richer and richer the poorer nations grow ever poorer, in spite of all the aid they have succeeded in getting from the richer nations in the past, the stream of which is now drying up to a veritable trickle.

Secondly there is the whole field of exploitation as a result of the commercial activities of all those capitalist organisations involved in trading overseas. In addition to their visible export and import of goods there are the innumerable activities in organising the sale and purchase of such goods: such as their transport by sea or air to and fro from Britain, the provision of money in cash or on credit in connection with all this, the insurance charges, the provision of experts in all branches of technology, postal and tele-communication services, advertising, the provision of films and television, etc., etc., not forgetting the regular charge for commissions on all these services—every single item of imported raw materials or manufactured goods, for example, has a percentage added as a commission payable by the producer overseas to the agent or principal in Britain who agrees to purchase such goods. In the Government's statistics all these items are listed as 'Other Services'. The majority of these charges are regarded as generally collected in the City of London.

The earnings that the 'City' amasses in this way have recently been the subject of a detailed investigation by an unofficial organisation called the British Export Council. W. M. Clarke, a writer of

‡ It should be said that the rise has not been so steep since 1946 as these figures would indicate, as both oil and insurance have since been included, as shown for instance in the revised figures for 1956 which were subsequently corrected to read £577 m. as against £373 m. originally stated.

several books in the past on the earnings of the City, himself an ex-financial and industrial editor of *The Times* and subsequently an editorial consultant to the monthly magazine *The Banker*, was instrumental in getting this Council to set up a Committee on Invisible Exports, primarily to investigate the extent of these earnings of the 'City'.

(In the second part of this survey next month the findings of the Clarke Report will be examined and conclusions drawn on the aggregate of Britain's invisible earnings).

REBEL COUNTESS

Constance Markiewicz and the Women's struggle

C. Desmond Greaves

ON February 4, 1968, falls the centenary of the birth of the first woman to be elected to the Westminster Parliament. This was not, as is often erroneously said, the serene prophetess of high Toryism, Nancy Astor, but a more vigorous, colourful and refreshing personality—Constance Gore-Booth, later Countess Markiewicz,* socialist, feminist and national revolutionary.

She had an astonishing life. Born in London, at 7 Buckingham Gate, her family and entourage wealthy Irish Ascendancy, she was reared at the hereditary 'big house', Lissadell on the coast of Co. Sligo. Here she received the education appropriate to her class, riding, hunting, music, painting, dancing and drama, amid that romantic scenery nostalgically recreated by the poet Yeats—a scenery composed of two elements, nature unspoiled where labour brought the peasant no reward, and parkland rendered exotic by use for pure consumption.

The Gore-Booth estate was nevertheless an exception less infrequent in Co. Sligo than in the districts of the great latifundia. Both father and brother were interested in science and exploration and brought a paternalistic attitude to a labour force they were not anxious to lose. They were on the bourgeois fringe of landlordism. Thanks to this, Constance was brought into contact with the co-operative movement founded by Sir Horace Plunkett, and almost simul-

* The correct spelling is of course Markiewicz, and so the Count always spelled his name. The Countess, at any rate later in life, used the v, doubtless so that her name should not be mis-pronounced by speakers of English.

taneously, with the women's suffrage movement which appeared in Sligo, with herself leading the way, in the year 1895.

In Paris, where she studied art, she met Count Markiewicz, a Polish country squire talented in the arts, and was married in London in 1900. The couple settled in Dublin, where they worked with the famous figures of the literary renaissance. Her political history is an apt illustration of Marian Ramelson's[†] thesis that in subject nations the women secure emancipation in the victory of the national movement. But it needs emphasising that even then they do not do so without a struggle.

The Home Rule Party did not admit women into membership. As a result Maud Gonne with a number of associates established *Ininí na hEireann* (Daughters of Ireland) into which Constance Markievicz was inevitably recruited. But she was dissatisfied with spending her energies solely in a feminine auxiliary. Drawing closer to the revolutionaries of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, she was, with their aid and somewhat to the moderate Griffith's distaste, admitted to membership and elected to the national executive committee of Sinn Féin.

Together with Bulmer Hobson she founded the revolutionary boys' organisation *Na Fianna Eireann* some of whose leaders were executed in 1916. She secured the support of James Connolly in an endeavour to open this organisation to girls, and indeed won a victory at the 1912 convention. A postal ballot subsequently reversed the decision much to the disgust of Connolly's two daughters. Her drive for sex equality was taking her steadily to the left, and it is not surprising that she found it eventually only in the ranks of the Labour movement.

The occasion was the great Transport lock-out of 1913-14 in Dublin, when she threw herself into the struggle with unsurpassed energy, organising the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union's food kitchens and looking after the locked-out workers' creature comforts in innumerable ways. It was at this time that she joined the Irish Citizen Army, which, while it insisted that all eligible to do so should hold a trade union card, took no account of sex. In her capacity as an officer of that force, and not as a member of the women's auxiliary of the Volunteers (*Cumann na mBan*) she took a leading part in the Easter insurrection, being second in command at Stephens Green. She was arrested, tried by court

[†] The Petticoat Rebellion, *Lawrence & Wishart*

martial, sentenced to death, but reprieved on account of her sex—the reason displeasing her if not the fact.

While in Holloway jail she learned that she had been elected to Parliament as member for Dublin South-west, and chuckled when she received David Lloyd George's invitation to attend its opening. The twenty-six Sinn Fein Deputies who were not in jail met in Dublin on January 21, 1919, and decided to boycott Westminster and to establish themselves as the constituent assembly of an independent Ireland. Constance Markievicz adhered to these. She was released on March 10, and on April 2 became the first woman Cabinet Minister outside Soviet Russia, Minister for Labour in the Republican Government.

She had thus vindicated the right of women's access to the highest offices of state, military and political. Undoubtedly, this achievement was facilitated by the existence of the general democratic movement of national liberation. After failing in its military effort to suppress the people's power in Ireland the British Government engineered a political settlement tolerable to itself, and the era of neo-colonialism in Ireland began. Constance Markievicz took the uncompromisingly Republican side in the struggle that ensued, as did her former followers in Cumann na mBan and Na Fianna Eireann.

It is noticeable that one of the gains of the revolutionary period which was retained was the equality of voting rights for women which was provided for in the many ways retrograde Irish Free State Constitution. Irish women had equal access to the ballot box seven years before their sisters in England, and only two years after the American women won the nineteenth amendment after three-quarters of a century of struggle. Today only Switzerland in Western Europe still excludes women from the vote, and according to United Nations figures published in 1966, out of 130 countries women are ineligible for the vote in eight only, a further eight imposing certain restrictions upon them. In the field of access to the highest positions, however, the situation is far less favourable. And in the field of economic equality a revolution has yet to be started.

Countess Markievicz was well aware of the need to bring the women into the trade union movement, and gave help in the early years of the Irish Women Workers' Union, founded in 1911. Her sister, Eva Gore-Booth, the poet, had founded the Manchester and Salford Women's Trades Council with a view to combining the proletarian and democratic tasks of working women. Today, despite serious deficiencies in access to employment, and in many countries,

discriminatory legal provisions (e.g. in relation to marriage, custody of children, parental control, nationality, property and contract) it is indisputable that the most widespread and glaring inequalities are economic.

Even in Ireland and Britain (not to mention EEC where to use UNO jargon there is 'a discrepancy between law and fact') the long advocated equal remuneration for work of equal value is yet to be achieved. Into this and other matters it is announced *in 1968* that the Labour Party will make a 'sweeping probe'. Such a probe would still be necessary everywhere outside the socialist countries. And except in the socialist countries the political gains won by the women during the national liberation struggle have yet to be extended throughout the economic field.

In this connection reference must be made to neo-colonialism, which carries forward the system of exploitation of the old colonialism under reorganised management, and produces the same economic backwardness and imbalance in forms exaggerated as a result of the deeper crisis of imperialism.

Neo-colonialism is probably the most serious influence holding back the progress of women on a world scale, and assuredly those who suffer from it today will win their freedom in the national movement to throw off that yoke, as in the conditions of earlier days their mothers and grandmothers did before them. In doing so they can be assured of the support of the progressive forces in the imperialist countries, and not least of the women's organisations of those countries, who are increasingly alive to the problem.

To the great democratic movement which will lead to the final emancipation of half the human race, the memory of Constance Markiewicz should serve as a special inspiration.

MY 'OBITUARY'

Jack Dash

(The following piece, written by Mr. Jack Dash, was read by him on the BBC TV programme 'At the Eleventh Hour' on December 30, 1967. We need hardly add that Mr. Dash is still very much alive, no doubt to the deep regret of the port employers.—Ed., LM.)

MR. JACK DASH, who died last week when trying to pacify a mob of redeployed port employers, was the first Communist Minister of Labour in the Bertrand Russell Coalition Government of

1971. His term of office was marked by the implementation of the Harold Wilson-Ray Gunter Award Scheme for the most promising ex-company director recruited to the shop floor, in memory of two of the most militant employers' leaders. He also launched the 'free sea travel for dockers' system.

Mr. Dash became politically active at an early age and in 1936 he joined the Communist Party and remained a member until his death. In 1937 he was awarded the Tolpuddle Martyrs Medal for Trade Union Recruiting. In 1945 Mr. Dash decided to become a docker and he was accordingly recommended to a place in the industry by the Port Employers Federation. It is understood that a number of the Federation's members decided later that this may have been a mistake. From the start of his working life Jack Dash was an industrial militant and he once said that the only epitaph he wanted was:

*'Here lies Jack Dash,
All he wanted was to separate them from their cash.'*

This is thought to have been one of his frequent friendly references to the dock employers with whom he had a close lifelong relationship based on warm mutual dislike. For a number of reasons the employers considered that Mr. Dash was a bad influence on the dock industry and they alleged that he had led a number of unofficial strikes which had had a disastrous effect on their profits. When Mr. Dash pointed out that these strikes had helped to raise the minimum wages in the docks from £9 in 1959 to £17 in 1967 and £30 in 1972, the employers replied that that was exactly what they were complaining about.

Long before he joined the Government, Jack Dash was a public figure. For this he had to thank the national newspapers, and throughout his life he felt a proper sense of gratitude to Fleet Street for the painstaking and sympathetic approach which marked their dealings with him. Mr. Dash particularly appreciated the Press Council censures of the *Daily Express* printed by that paper after the Devlin Report in 1965, and the annual series of apologies printed by the *Daily Telegraph* after every third story that they wrote about him. However, Mr. Dash's favourite newspaper (after the *Morning Star*) was the *Daily Mirror*. The *Mirror* could always be counted on to maintain his position as a controversial figure and keep his postbag full of rather short anonymous letters. The *Mirror* was also remarkable for its scrupulous use of its uniquely influential position and its respect for Mr. Dash's private life. It is thought that when he described the *Daily Mirror* as 'the navvies' comic', Mr. Dash was being humorous.

MARX'S CAPITAL AND SOCIALIST CONSTRUCTION

Anatoli Pashkov

Corresponding Member of the
Academy of Sciences of the USSR

(The following is an extract from an address delivered at the International Discussion Conference on the Centenary of the publication of Marx's Capital, organised by the Marx Memorial Library. It shows how Marx's major work has been used in the practical building of socialism in the USSR.)

MARX'S *Capital* plays a great part in working out the problems of managing the national economy and planning it, both in the period of transition from capitalism to socialism and in socialist society itself.

It is of the utmost importance for the practical running of the national economy to understand that economic life in socialist society depends on certain objective laws, which have to be recognised and used in a planned way by society in the interests of the people. This understanding did not come to our economists all at once. In the 'twenties there was widespread among Soviet economists the view that under socialism there would be no objective laws: people would consciously set themselves definite targets, the economy would function according to plan, production relations between people would become obvious, and there would be no need for such a theoretical science as political economy.

Lenin criticised this notion, referring to Engels's definition of the subject-matter of the political economy of socialism in the broad sense of the word, and stressed that economic laws would exist in communist society as well. Marx's *Capital* contributed to the mastery of this important conception by the economists. The idea of economic life under socialism being subject to definite objective laws, the comprehension and proper use of which would place production, distribution and consumption under the control of society itself, runs through the whole of *Capital*—in which such laws are contrasted with the laws of capitalism, functioning blindly, behind the backs of the commodity producers.

Capital plays a great part in the theoretical discovery of the individual economic laws of socialism and the system of these laws. Demonstrating his scientific foresight, Marx directly names several

laws of socialism: the law of planned development of the national economy as a whole, the planned establishment of the necessary proportions between the various branches of the national economy, the law of distribution of products according to labour performed, and others.

Having revealed the law of surplus value as the major economic law of capitalism, Marx insistently underlined the radical difference between the main aim of production based on social property and the aim of production under capitalism. Capitalist production aims at the hunt for profit. But under socialism production serves the purpose of ever more fully satisfying the growing needs of the people. This constitutes the fundamental feature, the main trend of development of socialist production, the basic advantage of the socialist economic system compared with that of capitalism.

Marx showed that some economic laws functioning in capitalist society are inherent in all other modes of production, yet possess specific features under capitalism. This idea has helped economists in the socialist countries to separate out, in the system of economic laws of socialism, those features which are common to all formations: the law of correspondence of production relations to the nature and level of the productive forces; the law of economy of working time (the raising of the productivity of social labour), the law of people's needs increasing with the growth of the productive forces of society, etc.

Capital's contribution to the investigation of the problem of commodity and money relations in socialist society is of a specific nature. Marx and Engels considered that the elimination of private ownership, and the victory of the public ownership of the means of production would ultimately result in the disappearance of the law of value and related categories: the commodity, money, price, wages, profit, interest, rent. Labour would be measured directly, in units of labour time. Production plans would be worked out by means of the direct comparison of the utility of different kinds of products with one another and of the quantity of labour expended for their respective production. Distribution of the product would also take place without using the category of value.

The great significance of the market, trade, money and commodity relations in the period of *building* a socialist economy was demonstrated by Lenin. He justified the necessity of giving effect—with the help of money and of the market—to the principle of material interest of people in the results of their labour, the necessity of

measuring and correlating production costs and output, the introduction of economic accounting into the practice of socialist enterprises, the recouping of their costs and their making a profit.

Experience has proved that the market, trade, money and commodity relations, are indispensable to socialist society, at all stages of its development. It has shown that the law of value continues to function here as well, with a different social role as compared with capitalism. Marx's labour theory of value is of vast significance for socialist society as well—for the practice of planned price formation and evaluating the efficiency of socialist production.

The functioning of the law of value under socialism signifies the existence of a particular group of laws, common to several modes of production, but possessing a completely different social nature and impact as compared with the law of value in commodity capitalist economy. Marx indicated in *Capital* that production and circulation of commodities are characteristic of utterly different modes of production—though their volume and significance are not the same. It is not commodity production and circulation that determine the social nature of particular economic modes of production, but the nature of the ownership of the means of production.

Profit, interest, differential rent serve under socialism as the evaluation in money form of various parts of the surplus product created in that society by labour free from exploitation, and used for the satisfaction of the toilers' needs, including the raising of their living standards. The objective necessity of the existence of a surplus product in socialist society was shown by Marx in *Capital*. Quite erroneous, therefore, are the statements that the utilisation of the market, of money and commodity relations, of profit, interest, and land rent in the socialist countries, means the employment of purely bourgeois forms and methods of running the economy.

In practically guiding the development of the national economy in socialist countries, the theory of socialist reproduction is of the greatest importance. Marx himself pointed out a great many important features of capitalist reproduction which would operate in a society of 'associated producers' as well: the necessary recouping of material costs; the necessary transforming of part of the surplus product into additional components of production, i.e. accumulation, as the premise for extended reproduction of the social product; division of the social product (in physical terms) into two departments—production of the means of production, and production of articles of consumption; the possibility of using part of the deprecia-

tion fund for extended reproduction, and so on. The regularities in correlation of different parts of the social product, discovered by Marx and illustrated by his schemes of reproduction, are also maintained under socialism to a considerable extent, though the social nature of the process of reproduction itself is different.

With the entry of a number of other countries on the path of socialism, and the formation of the world socialist system, problems of economic collaboration between the socialist countries (foreign trade relations, international specialisation of production, etc.) become practically important. For solving these problems, Marx's *Capital* is useful in certain respects. When solving the complex problem of the basis of prices in the world socialist market, Marx's views on the necessity to distinguish between national and international forms of value, as the basis of prices, are particularly important.

The complete and final victory of socialism in the USSR has brought forward problems of the building of communism. The inevitability of the gradual growth of socialist society into communist society was originally proved by Marx. He also indicated the major premises and trends of such a growth, the main features of communism; the mighty development of the productive forces and a tremendous growth of social wealth; labour ceasing to be only the means of existence, but itself becoming the first need of life; fulfilment of the principle: 'from each according to his capacities, to each according to his needs'; the all-round development of the individual. The programme of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union for building communism in the USSR is based on these principles of scientific communism.

During the short period of its existence up till now, the socialist system of national economy has already demonstrated its vast potentialities and advantages. It has ensured the rapid transformation of previously backward countries into countries of highly developed industry, steady and high rates of economic growth without cyclic fluctuations and crises, the actual right to work for all, the steady rise of living standards for the working people.

In the Soviet Union there is no unemployment. At the present moment we are completing the transition to a five-day week, with two rest days, while retaining 41 hours of work and without reducing wages. The whole of our people enjoys free medical aid on the basis of non-contributory social insurance, and pensions have now been extended from the workers to collective farmers. Education,

including higher education, is free. Housing is being extended at an accelerated rate. During the last 15 years about 100 million people have been rehoused. As you may know, rent takes no more than two or three per cent of wages. Real wages are constantly increasing, and the incomes of collective farmers as well.

I must therefore express my surprise that one of the speakers here said that there was 'misery' in the USSR. At best one can call this a fantasy. The socialist system of economy has brought it about that the USSR in volume of production holds first place in Europe and second in the world; and in respect of many products it is already first in the world.

The potentialities and advantages of the socialist system of economy are far from being used to the full, however. The economic reforms now being carried out in the USSR and in some other socialist countries aim at the fuller use of these potentialities, at the further growth of the effectiveness of socialist production. The road lies through the perfecting of the system of economic planning and management, on the basis of the study of the objective laws of socialism, and of extending the economic methods of management at the expense of those which are mainly administrative.

In the preparation and application of the economic reforms, economic science is essential—and in the development of that science *Capital*, the immortal work of Marx, is playing an enormous part.

TRANSCENDENTAL MATERIALISM

(Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, who numbers the Beatles among his followers, runs a Centre of Transcendental Meditation in the Himalayas. The following extracts from an account of the Centre, published in the Indian periodical Blitz on October 14, 1967, reveal the Maharishi as a 'mystic' with a strong sense of material values.)

'The Centre, where this meditation exercise takes place, has an area of 15 acres, taken on a 19-year lease from the UP Government for the paltry annual rent of Rs. 150.

'The Maharishi has spent Rs. 120,000 already on the construction of the Centre, which has sprung up on the timeless Himalayas as a modern colony. He plans to spend another Rs. 120,000 to make it more sophisticated.

'The colony has been planned by an engineer pupil of the Maharishi who is one of its inmates. It is divided into several sectors . . . The main buildings of the colony are made up of six blocks. The blocks have, in all, 58 rooms, each room with an attached bathroom fitted with a tub, and an annexe.

'The colony has its own water supply. The water from a mountain streamlet is stored in a tank up the hill and carried in pipes. The power is supplied by the Government's Electricity Board.

'The entire colony has been designed to make it comfortable for and attractive to, the Westerners. The reason is simple. *Virtually the entire flock of the Maharishi's fans are Westerners. He has little Indian following.*

'The Maharishi has set the three winter months of November, December and January as the ideal season for his meditation to go into the realm of transcendence. A suitable season for the Western tycoons.

'Last year, the camp was attended by 60 meditators. Four of them were Indians; all the rest were foreigners, mostly West Germans'.

CORRESPONDENCE:

VIETNAM

NORMAN ATKINSON'S ARTICLE in the January issue gives us an encouraging picture of the growing opposition in the States to the war in Vietnam. This opposition would be greatly heartened by an active movement in this country to support the stand he and many of his colleagues are taking in opposition to the British Government's support of the USA.

The military stalemate the Americans are facing in Vietnam is naturally provoking many Americans previously supporting the war to begin to question it—a lesson from which our own Government could learn.

The British-Vietnam Committee which has published in full the recent Programme of the South Vietnam Liberation Front would be glad to forward a copy to readers of *LM* (stamped addressed envelope, please, to the Committee, c/o 25a Abbey Gardens, N.W.8) who would like to

acquaint themselves with its analysis of the position in South Vietnam and the perspectives for victory by the patriotic and democratic forces aligned against the US invaders and their Saigon collaborators.

Any sort of arrangement between Saigon and the Front as envisaged by Mr. Atkinson seems unlikely. Speculations about a possible agreement between sections of the Front and the Thieu-Ky regime must be judged in the light of the Programme's exposure of its role and the need for its overthrow and replacement by a democratic government of national union.

The Vietnamese, both North and South, remain consistent in their stand that no compromise is possible over their goal of complete national independence and the end of all foreign intervention.

HILDA VERNON,
Secretary, British-Vietnam Committee.

BOOKS

The World That Was Ours

Hilda Bernstein

Heinemann, 246 pp., 42s.

OF THE MANY recent books on the hated apartheid system in South Africa this is easily the most gripping for the ordinary reader. It does not set out to make a deep analysis of the roots of apartheid. Yet, in its vivid portrayal of the personal experiences of the Bernstein family it cannot fail to arouse the anger of any reader.

Hilda (the author) and Lionel Bernstein (popularly known as Rusty for his ginger hair) came to know each other because of their common concern with the fight for racial equality.

They first met as members of the Labour Party League of Youth, but soon broke away because it rejected Africans as equals. Before the world war both joined the Communist Party (then legal) which, in the author's words, was '... the only political party that had no colour-bar, and unified diverseracial and social groups'.

From the outset of their political life they were completely integrated with the African struggle for liberation, and in 1946 both were arrested for assisting the strike of African mine-workers. Towards the end of the war (though the vote was confined to whites) Hilda was elected to the Johannesburg City Council. In this capacity she was able to visit the broken-down African shantytowns and realised even more the need to change these terrible conditions.

Earlier books have portrayed the vile character and consequences of apartheid. What is different in this one is the simple but penetrating narrative of the experiences of one

family, while at the same time entwining this with a political appraisal of the nature of the struggle against it. It frankly describes the uncertainty and torturing fears of the author about the fate of her husband, and the disturbing impact on the two children—the girl Toni and the boy Keith.

Who can review with equanimity the events of the past 20 years since the 1948 'Suppression of Communism Act' in South Africa? It led to Sharpeville in 1960, to the infamous Treason Trial which lasted for four years, and to the Rivonia Trial of 1963 at which Nelson Mandela and other African leaders were given savage sentences.

If these experiences arouse hatred for the apartheid system the courageous struggle against it also creates unbounded pride and respect for those who resisted. The description of the crowd outside the court at the trial of Nelson Mandela (when he was first remanded on bail) is an inspiring expression of the spirit of revolt:

'So we moved, in a unit, a solid mass; we were not separate people but a single living whole... singing contempt of the court, its trappings and flunkeys, singing defiance of the police, their arms and power, singing belief in the future, in freedom, in the possibility of happiness. Each of us felt enlarged and released, as though the sound of the singing alone could liberate us from the sorrows and terrors of our lives and lift us above the possibility of defeat and despair.'

There is no space to describe all the stages of the struggle of the Bernsteins, finally left with no alternative but to launch on a hazardous escape from South Africa. Many other courageous fighters have been forced also to take this course. All of them have played a noble part in the struggle in South Africa, and are still waging the fight from outside. I know of no

other book which has such a high quality of convincing the Labour and progressive movement outside South Africa to redouble their efforts in solidarity action with those still in

South Africa who are waging a brave struggle against a system equally as vile as, and in some respects even worse, than that of Hitler fascism.

IDRIS COX

The Zinoviev Letter

Lewis Chester, Stephen Fay and
Hugo Young

Heinemann, 219 pp., 30s.

THE AUTHORS OF THIS BOOK wrote an enlightening article in the *Sunday Times* last December. In it they finally exposed the gross swindle perpetrated on the British public in 1924 by the Tory Party leaders, with the help of Foreign Office and other officials and that of a group of Russian Whites, monarchists thrown out of their own country in the Civil War, who were professional forgers.

The 'Zinoviev Letter' purported to be a document addressed by the then President of the Communist International, Zinoviev, to the leaders of the British Communist Party, giving them all kinds of nonsensical instructions, including a group addressed to a non-existent 'Military Section' of the Communist Party of Great Britain.

The thing stank. Anyone who was not an ass, or a member of the more brainless part of the Establishment, could see it was a forgery. It was ruthlessly exposed by our Party, by the Soviet Government, the Communist International, the General Council of the TUC and such famous non-Communist MPs as E. D. Morel. But Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, then Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary of the first Labour Government, professed to be in doubt, much to the disgust of his colleagues.

As a result, the bombshell—more accurately, stink-bomb—was exploded by the Foreign Office, in collusion with the Tory leaders, during the election

campaign. As a result, there was a big rally of the 'passive voters' against Labour—a fact which the newspaper commentators, then and now, and the authors of the book, tend to overlook. The Labour vote went up, compared with the 1923 elections, from 4½ million to just over 5,400,000. But the Tory vote went up from 5,500,000 to 7,800,000: part of this was due to a loss of nearly 1,400,000 by the Liberals, but part of the increase represented the other illiterate voters terrified by this 'Red scare'.

The authors have added to their discoveries of 1966 a large number of speculations as to who did what, in the Intelligence Service, the Foreign Office and the Tory Party. This is useful to have on record. But the essential thing is that the same blackguardly clique of well-bred public school men who had launched the 'Piggott forgeries' to break the Irish leader Parnell in the '80s, who had sworn blind that the notorious Jameson Raid against the Boers in South Africa in the '90s had been launched without the knowledge of the then Premier, Lord Salisbury, and in 1921 had forged entire issues of *Pravda* for circulation through British official channels in Soviet Russia, were still at work in 1924, as they were many years later, when the postwar Labour Government vouched for the forged 'M Plan', which was used to blacken the reputation of the German Communists.

It is a pity that, with all their researches, the authors are silent about these facts, which put the 'Zinoviev Letter' in its proper historical perspective.

ANDREW ROTHSTEIN.

The Middle East: Crisis, Causes, Solution

Bert Ramelson

Communist Party pamphlet, 42 pp., 2s.

IN THE COMPLEX conditions which exist in a world of turmoil, pregnant with historical change, there is surely no issue which cries out for Marxist clarification more than that of the problem of the Middle East, Arab liberation and Zionism. Bert Ramelson's booklet on the Middle East changes all that, and at last we have a clarification which lays bare in depth the conflict of imperialism and Arab liberation in the Middle East, and the origins of Zionism.

The booklet commences by considering the situation arising from the Six Days' War, and discusses the motivations involved. It goes on to show the importance of the Middle East to imperialism, and its methods to realise its goals. It then discusses the so-called 'Jewish Problem' in depth, and the alternative solutions to this 'problem'. The author makes a critical survey of the birth of Zionism: its philosophy and the falseness of its theories, and then surveys the origins and rise of the Israeli State, the attitude of communists to this State, and the new situation created in the Middle East. The author discusses nationalism in general and that of the Arab liberation movement and Jews in particular, and clearly brings out how the rulers of Israel have consistently played the imperialist game right from the foundation of the Israeli State. Ramelson proves his case by his analysis of the Suez aggression and the tie-up between Israeli ruling circles and oil imperialism.

The author fairly states the Israeli case justifying its aggression against the Arab states, listing each Israeli complaint, and then proceeds to

expose the falsity of the Israeli case by answering each point in turn. He analyses Israel's postwar position and discusses the perspectives for Israel's future. The booklet ends with a consideration of the possibilities for a peaceful solution, and communist policy thereto.

Considering the space at his disposal, Ramelson's presentation of his material is excellent, although some of his formulations might merit further discussion. For example, his juxtaposition of the Jewish situation with that of the American 'Black Nationalists' is doubtful. The American Negroes do not demand, or covet, a separate state, especially at the expense of another people; nor do they give allegiance to a foreign power or claim a dual citizenship. Moreover, the American Negroes actively contribute to the common struggle of the American people for civil rights, justice, work and bread.

In discussing the nationalist trend Ramelson shows that there is more than one side to nationalism, that while on the one hand it can be a progressive force it can also exhibit the face of chauvinism; and he illustrates this by a reference to Mikunis, the former General Secretary of the Israeli Communist Party, who, Ramelson claims, accepted the arguments of the Israeli Government justifying aggression, because of the atmosphere generated by the Six Days' War. However, it seems much more the case that the chauvinistic nationalism exhibited by Mikunis and his group predated the war by some time.

Ramelson's pamphlet fulfils an urgent need and will provide a weapon for progressive people, Jews and non-Jews alike, in the struggle against forces supporting imperialist designs in the Middle East.

SID DOUGLAS.

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